

Watertown Daily Times

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HEADLINE: Music contest draws students

TO BE ANNUAL EVENT: Nonprofit competition benefits all participants

BYLINE: By ROBERT CYR

TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: POTSDAM

LEAD: Holding their instruments and nervously waiting their turn, 24 student musicians from the Crane School of Music competed Saturday afternoon at SUNY Potsdam for a chance to add some money to their wallets - and a recording to their resumes.

REST: It was the first annual Madstop Records *Lillian* *Cohen* Classical Music Competition, held in memory of the music lover and Brooklyn native. She is the grandmother of event organizer Brandon J. Mendelson, whose parents are contributing \$1,000 a year to keep the program going. Musicians were allowed a maximum of seven minutes to perform a piece of classical music of their choosing and were judged for their performance execution and

style by a panel of three judges, said Madstop Records Director of Concert Production Allison Devery.

"We're glad we got the response we did," she said. "It gives them all an opportunity to demonstrate and hone their skills, and another thing to add as experience on their resumes."

Ms. Devery, who will graduate in December with a bachelor of fine arts in vocal performance and business administration, said the record company, with about 15 volunteer staff, has been working for a year promoting student performances and helping them record their music. It's a nonprofit gig that benefits everyone involved, she said - from business and advertising experience for the organizers to performance and exposure for the musicians. In addition to the cash prizes, the three winners will be able to record music of their choice at a studio on the Crane School of Music campus.

Celebrating first place was Alex K. Lombard, a 22 -year-old senior and piano performance major whose rendition of "Funerailles" by Franz Liszt won him \$500. Mr. Lombard, from Lake George, said it was his first time in the top spot in a competition, and the win will give him confidence for his next meet June 1 - the Five Towns Music and Art Foundation Young Musician Competition in Hewlett, with a purse of \$1,000, he said. "I would love to continue on with all of this, to be a concert pianist," he said. Mr. Lombard will attend the Boston Music Conservatory this fall.

Second place, a \$200 prize, was awarded to Japan native Erika Tazawa, who played Prokofiev's "Sonata No. VI" on piano from

memory. Third place, for \$100, was given to Christina E. DeFrancisco, 20, from West Islip, who performed a clarinet rendition of "Concert Fantasia on Motives from Verdi's Rigoletto" by Luigi Bassi.

Paula E. Mendelson, daughter of *Lillian* *Cohen*, was pleased at the sudden turnout of young talent and felt the fund left to her by her mother was put to good use. "This is exactly how she would have wanted it," she said.